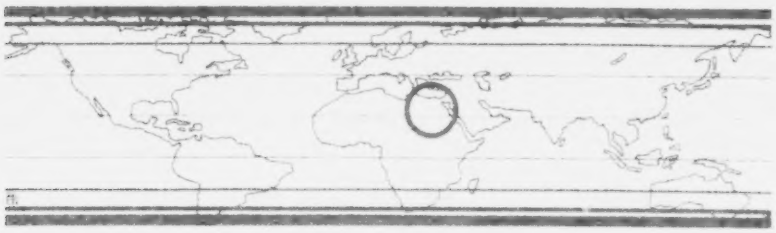
ROYAL ONTARIO MUSEUM ROM

# ARCHÆOLOGICAL NEWSLETTER



The Committee for Field Archaeology
Royal Ontario Museum
100 Queen's Park
Toronto, Ontario, Canada M5S 2C6

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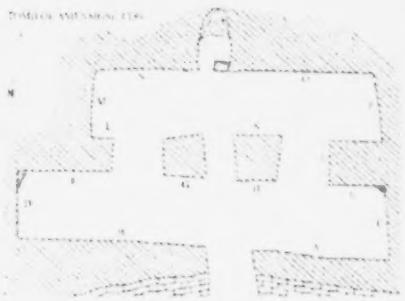
## THE TOMB OF AMENMOSE: Almost done

*Roberta L. Shaw, Assistant Curator (Egyptology), Department of World Cultures*

The field season this year at TT89 (the tomb of Amenmose) was but two short weeks, 27 November - 10 December, 2005. Co-directors Roberta Shaw and Lyla Pinch-Brock completed recording the tomb on digital photography and final wall tracings. In the nine years since the first season (See **Archaeological Newsletter** (ANL) **Vol. III, No. 3, Dec. 1996**) I have spent four, two to three-week sessions and Lyla, five. Our short seasons are due to the availability of Lyla whose free-lance artistic talents are in much demand by many projects, not only in Egypt but also in Greece and Yemen. She and her husband, Ted Brock, reside in Egypt.

Our work has yielded a complete set of slides (which are now digitized) as well as a complete digital record, thanks to the generous donation of a camera by Elizabeth Walter of the ROM's Department of Museum Volunteers. Lyla's drawings, traced on acetate sheets placed directly on the walls of the tomb, have (mostly) been scanned at high resolution and can now be "stitched" together using a CAD programme to produce images of each entire wall. Even with Ted's wide-angle camera, we were not able to photograph all the walls in entirety. Ted joined us for three days this season for wide-angle photos and help in discerning the faint hieroglyphs. Unfortunately,



**Plan of the tomb of Amenmose**

some are lost forever due to the ravages of time, erosion and human activity over the millennia.

Our inspector, Amr Abu-el Safa Khalifa, from the Supreme Council of Antiquities, was helpful at all times and keenly interested in our work. He is presently working on his Master's degree in Egyptology. We appreciate the help from the site guards (all eight of them) and their kindness in bringing us tea each day. This they boil up at the guard hut about half-way up the hill to TT89. They were also ready to do any heavy hauling of back-packs and satchels each day and with the project equipment at the start and finish of the work.

## The Tomb

For those of you who may not have my 1996 ANL article handy, let me briefly describe the tomb. The Theban (modern Luxor) hills are dotted with some 500 tombs dating roughly from 1500 - 1200 BCE. Tomb 89 was built by one Amenmose who served King Amenhotep III (1391-1353 BCE), King Tutankhamun's grandfather. Amenmose's titles are "Aristocrat, Seal-Bearer of Upper Egypt, Sole Companion of the King, King's Retainer of Foreign Expeditions, and Steward in the Southern City" in ascending order of importance and rarity. The wall paintings are not in pristine condition, although some have survived vandalism, weather and occupation (which included cooking fires) better than others.

The plan consists of a courtyard and two rooms carved into the limestone escarpment, with a shallow niche at the middle of the inner room. This probably served for housing the owner's statue or it was possibly an abandoned attempt to enlarge the size of the tomb. The shaft leading to an underground burial chamber is in the courtyard, and was excavated by Sir Robert Mond in the early 20th century. He reported this work in two sentences in a small publication in 1905. He found virtually nothing as it had obviously been ransacked in antiquity.

## The Wall Paintings

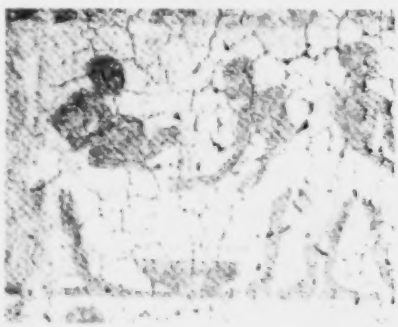
Depictions of the tomb owner have been eradicated in all instances but four. There is no certain answer for this, except for some sort of dislike or fear of the images by the later occupants. There were some eradications of gods during the reign of the next king (Akhenaten), but the gods are still present in this tomb. As well, at the Royal Ontario Museum, we have our own example of this practice on the Punt wall in the Egyptian gallery; the result of an attempt to eradicate the existence of "King" Hatshepsut.

Room One, the outer room, contains several scenes that are common in Theban tombs. The image of the owner and his family fishing and fowling in the marshes displays the Egyptian ideal of overpowering the forces of chaos and establishing balance and order in life. The papyrus thicket wherein this takes place is a symbol of protection (Isis and Horus took refuge in the thicket) and rebirth (they succeeded in having Horus ascend to power). As well, it stands for the primordial swamp out of which the first mound of earth emerged for the creation of life. Even the fish on his spear are symbolic: the tilapia was associated with the creator god, Atum and the Nile perch was associated with rebirth. The children that accompany Amenmose on the skiffs fulfil the notion of the cycle of life and therefore the notion of rebirth in the afterlife.

There is always a banquet scene in the Theban tombs and TT89 is no exception. This provides the owner with the finest foodstuffs in the afterlife, in the company of his friends and family. It also connects the deceased to festivals held in the area (especially the national holiday of celebrating the dead - much like our Hallowe'en) that involved vigil and feasting, thereby incorporating the dead into the realm of the living.

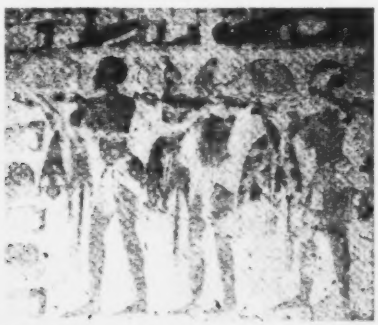
## Incense and the Land of Punt

Another scene in the outer room is of great interest



Incense workers

because it is unique. It is an array of some 100 men busy manufacturing incense, and perhaps some by-product that remains a puzzle as we have no other depiction for comparison. We know that it's incense because the only inscription on the whole wall is "incense". The main ingredients for incense were the famous resins, frankinsence and myrrh, and these were imported into Egypt from Arabia and Africa. This directly connects this wall with two in Room Two (the inner room), namely the 'tribute' theme and another rarity in tomb decoration - contact with the land of Punt.



**Tribute bearers**

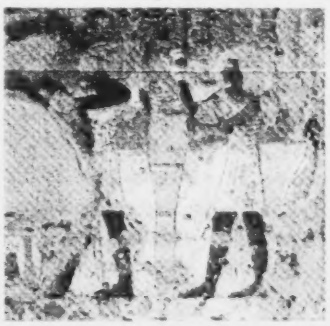
The tribute wall shows Egypt's regular trading partners, i.e., Aegeans, Syrians and Nubians bringing their goods to be presented to the enthroned king. The Punt scene wall is one of only five known depictions of Puntites in tombs and here they are bringing large amounts of resin for barter, meeting Amenmose on his fine chariot at some entrepôt on the Red Sea - probably Sinai.

**Puntites delivering a mound of resin.**

These two adjacent walls represent Amenmose's career as King's Retainer of Foreign Expeditions and it looks like he also reaped the benefit of these trading expeditions by overseeing and controlling the incense production. This substance was in great demand and of high value, being used extensively in rituals of all types. Our Amenmose must have been a rather wealthy man.

The other decoration in Room Two consists of the funeral procession, a common theme showing lots of tomb furnishings and the coffin being dragged by oxen (much damaged). Adjacent to this is the depiction of the Opening of the Mouth Ritual that gives us a glimpse into the elaborate funerary rites practised at the ancient grave site. The mummy (upright) is libated, embraced and touched with holy instruments while the litany is intoned by the officiating lector priest - all this to restore the senses to the eyes, ears, mouth and nose; to bring the deceased back to life in the next world.

The nobility of ancient Thebes worked either for the king or for the temples and this is evident in their tombs. Scenes of a religious nature, including the Opening of the Mouth Ritual, are stressed in the tombs of temple personnel; while scenes relating to one's career in the service of the king, including



**Opening of the Mouth ritual**

depictions of the enthroned monarch, are foremost in those of state employees. As Steward in the Southern City [Thebes], Amenmose was responsible for state administration (and we have seen a fine example of this in the organization of foreign imports on the "tribute" and "Punt" walls) as well as liaison with the estates of the temple of Amun, thus having 'a foot in both camps'. The mix of career and religious themes on focal walls of his tomb serves to underline his connection to both power bases and thereby his identity as a 'double VIP'.

## Amenmose, the man

Study of the decoration and titles has given us a small window into the life of this man. He obviously was intimately involved with the king (the royal throne scene or icon), he himself travelled out of the country to trade with the fabled Land of Punt (the Punt scene), he produced a wealth of imported products for Egypt's - and the king's- luxury economy (the tribute icon) and he was an able industrial baron for his own enrichment (the incense icon). He also stressed his piety by adding two depictions of himself worshipping Osiris (god of the underworld) in his tomb and saw that his funeral ritual was placed prominently. He seems to have been the Egyptian equivalent of the Renaissance Man, so to speak.

Our work in the tomb itself is virtually finished, after five seasons. Lyla and I will work a study season in October 2006 that should see the completion of the computer drawings of each wall. We will then spend the last few days in the tomb for a final check of the drawings against the originals. The inscriptions, most of which have been published, consist of standard phrases and labels ("bringing the life-bouquet", etc.) and provide little insight into the tomb owner, except for his titles. Unfortunately, the one wall, (common to all tombs) featuring a lengthy inscription of the man's accomplishments has been completely destroyed. Rather, it is through the interpretation of the iconic scenes - especially the unique "incense" and rare "Punt" walls - that Amenmose speaks to us through some 34 centuries.


## Acknowledgments

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## Further reading


Hartwig, Melinda K., *Tomb Painting and Identity in Ancient Thebes, 1419-1372 BCE.* Monumenta Aegyptiaca X (Brussels 2004).

Strudwick, Nigel and Taylor, John. *The Theban Necropolis: Past, Present and Future.* The British Museum Press (London 2003).

**Lyla Pinch-Brock, the author, Amr Abu-el Safa Khalifa, and one of the guards.**


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